



# THE ADMINISTRATOR OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

JAN 09 2014

## MEMORANDUM

**SUBJECT:** Reaffirmation of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Indian Policy

**FROM:** Gina McCarthy 

**TO:** All EPA Employees

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in 1984 became the first federal agency to adopt a formal Indian Policy. Today, I am proud to formally reaffirm that policy. By my action, the EPA reiterates its recognition that the United States has a unique legal relationship with tribal governments based on the Constitution, treaties, statutes, executive orders and court decisions. The EPA recognizes the right of the tribes as sovereign governments to self-determination and acknowledges the federal government's trust responsibility to tribes. The EPA works with tribes on a government-to-government basis to protect the land, air and water in Indian Country.

The EPA's tribal program has evolved since the Indian Policy's adoption. Recent significant milestones include publishing new guidance for the Indian Environmental General Assistance Program and requiring annual training, "Working Effectively with Tribal Governments," to ensure all EPA employees are informed about our important work with tribes. I also have announced "Launching a New Era of State, Tribal and Local Partnerships" as a key, guiding theme for the EPA in the coming months and years. These activities and priorities are directly influenced by the principles contained within the EPA Indian Policy, which is attached.

The reaffirmation of the Indian Policy articulates the importance of our tribal programs and our relationship with tribal governments. Our work in Indian Country is crosscutting and affects all aspects of the EPA's day-to-day functions. The environmental challenges we face are many. We must protect our precious water resources and address chemical safety. And we must continue taking common-sense steps to reduce the harmful carbon pollution that fuels climate change. Only through continued partnership with tribes can we truly achieve a cleaner, healthier and more prosperous America today and for future generations.

It is an important time in our partnership with tribes as the EPA builds on past successes and strives to meet current and future environmental challenges in Indian Country. Please join me in advancing our strong partnership with tribal governments to protect human health and to safeguard the environment in Indian Country.

Attachment